

a genius; when D. H. Lawrence lets the
 glowing metal
 grow cold on his anvil, while he rants out
 some crazy
 preachment; at such moments I find rising
 before me a
 vision of those brave, but depressing,
 barbarians who
 chanted the sombre incoherencies of
Beowulf amid the
 moss-grown ruins they had made of Roman
 Bath. And
 I wonder whether, with a more generous
 admixture of
 French blood and Latin influence, English
 life and letters
 might not have gained a larger measure of
 our neighbours' gifts without losing anything essential
 of their own.

The differences between English and
 French literature,
 whether mainly due to race or no, are always
 a fascinating
 study. Could we but learn from them, they
 might be
 extremely valuable as well. The first great
 contrast, at
 least to the English eye, is the supremacy
 of English
 poetry and of French prose; but behind
 that literary
 contrast lies a psychological one. The
 Englishman, one
 may say, lives more in his unconscious than
 the French-
 man; he is more repressed and more in
 conflict with
 himself. Accordingly, he clings to a
 number of ideas
 that he is unwilling to look at too closely;
 he is haunted
 by a number of taboos and senses of guilt
 that he is afraid
 to question or to analyse. Not daring to
 follow freely
 where either his thoughts or his feelings
 might lead him
 if he let them, he runs away from both. He
 takes refuge

either in action or in dream. He constructs
an empire or
an epic, a business or a ballad. Strange
paradox!—the
most practical of nations has proved also the
most poetical*

No doubt these causes and effects work
within the
English mind in a virtuous circle. If our
countrymen
pursue practical activity because they
distrust thimcing,
feeling, and talking, they also disapprove of
thitiking,
feeling, and talking as distractions from
practical activity.
Action is dear to them for its own sake also; it
is the breath